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INTELLIGENCE AND  
POLITICS





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# INTELLIGENCE AND POLITICS

BY

JAMES T. SHOTWELL

*Professor of History in Columbia University  
Member American Delegation to Negotiate Peace, etc.*



NEW YORK  
THE CENTURY CO.

1921



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## P R E F A C E

The phrase "to make the world safe for democracy" has become a by-word for cynics; and for this the optimists are to blame. They failed to appreciate the dimensions of the task. But the task itself is, if anything, more valid than ever, by reason of the added danger of disillusionment; and unless some definite effort is forthcoming to make good the failure, the cynic will be justified by more than an eclipse of ideals. There are large sections of the civilized world threatened with the loss of their heritage of culture, countries where the guaranty no longer holds that has safeguarded through more histories than our own, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Now these are imperilled. The strain upon the fabric of civilization is almost at the breaking point, and the nation that remains complacently indifferent to such conditions but adds to its danger.

It is, however, less because the problems of democracy are so pressing than because the means for dealing with them are still undeveloped, that the following pages have been written. They contain no program of anticipatory solutions, but are limited to the suggestion of devices for appreciating experience. It is surely worth while to see if the political machinery already in operation can be adapted to further uses and ultimately be made effective to the point of meeting the great emergency.





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# INTELLIGENCE AND POLITICS

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## THE HESITATION IN THE FIRST PHASE OF THE WAR

To those in Washington during the Spring and Summer of 1917, who were in a position to watch the United States adjust itself for war, there was presented one of the most sobering experiences ever afforded to the student of history.

At first, as we all know, there was a strong emotional response to the call to arms. The quarrel that had been thrust upon us had been taken up in a spirit that appealed to the nobler instincts of the nation and the cause was made one with the century-long struggle of democracy for its place in the sun. Of a sudden it was seen that the decision which had been taken, placed before us a task like that at the founding of the nation. Democracy, then established, was now to be safeguarded, not only here, but throughout the world. Although we could but dimly sense the future, the fact that the American flag—with all its associations of republican history—was to be carried to the battle-lines of Europe, stirred within us the inspiration that comes from the consciousness of great responsibility. The names of Washington and Lincoln were evoked to witness the kinship of our spirit with that of the heroic past.

There are no instruments or methods known to the social sciences by which to measure the extent of this emotional response to the President's war-message. History

will have to rest satisfied with the casual evidence of a limited number of personal experiences. The nation was probably almost as much startled as it was inspired. But whether it caught its breath from surprise or an awed sense of new duty, there is no doubt but that its first response was one of acceptance.

Then came a reaction. As the first impulse died away and it became necessary to translate inspiration into action, the country began to show signs of bewilderment and to demand explanations and facts. So serious a change set in during the latter part of April and the entire month of May, that the very fate of the country seemed to hang in the balance. This is fairly well known to every one who reads the newspapers, but to those engaged upon the task of keeping the nation to its purpose the situation developed most compelling duties.

Thousands of letters poured daily into those offices of the Government upon which devolved the task of setting forth its ideals and purposes. They came from all parts of the country, but more especially from the West and the Middle West, where the European War had not seemed so much a part of our affairs as in the East. They came from all classes of citizens, from young men of military age—wanting to know *just why* they might be called upon to serve; from fathers and mothers asking the same question for their sons; insistent, pathetically insistent, upon their need for information as to the issue involved in the war; wanting to know *just what* would make the world safe for democracy.

The writers of these letters were asking about things they had never troubled about before. They had suddenly discovered that the horizon of our national life had widened; and they wanted to know, most of them probably for the first time, what it was now to include. They were not at all sure that these unfamiliar things concerned them. American political life—like that of most other nations, is

still parochial. One's own home is the natural starting point for the interest in the rest of the world, political or physical; and in America, most of these homes have been made by those who live in them; our citizens have had a share in a great creative work, building by their own efforts the communities as well as the houses in which they live. They are willing to admit that—as they used to say in the Germany of a kindlier day—"over the hills there are still people"; but so far the only people about whom they have had to concern themselves have been people of the same kind, intent upon doing a day's work, and minding their own business. Now these people were writing to Washington to find out why the bottom had dropped out of things. They were called upon to join an enterprise which seemed removed as far as possible from their own affairs. There was no lack of good will. From the most remote villages men were ready to offer themselves for the supreme sacrifice on behalf of that mystical sovereign of our whimsical democracy—Uncle Sam. They would go, if Uncle Sam really needed them. But they asked to be shown *how* and *why* he needed them. They wanted facts; and until they had them they were not sure themselves how far their patriotic duty ran.

That is the way the war came to the towns and country of America. The evidence of hesitation in the second phase, which became painfully clear to observers in Washington, was borne out by an analysis of the press of the country. In such a condition of doubt it was naturally impossible to feel assured of the readiness of the nation to go on, wholeheartedly and successfully, with the struggle. And, among those responsible for the conduct of affairs, there was some evidence of a pessimism or uncertainty, which in turn reacted upon the country at large. For a time the situation was such as to cause alarm in the minds of those who had definitely committed themselves to the policy of intervention. Fortunately, this pessimism was not justified. Faced

with the necessity for action, once the decision had been made, the great mass of the citizens of the United States felt themselves called upon to defend the honor of their country, to "see it through"; and, while not all sharing the full ardor of conviction, shouldered their burden with but slight complaint.

In crises like these a nation reveals the elements of its weakness; but it is a revelation which we tend to overlook because we are so anxiously intent upon finding evidences of its strength and power of achievement. Then, as soon as we begin actually to accomplish anything, we are so busy making good that we have no time to turn back and analyze our failures. Afterwards, we trick ourselves in order to save our self-respect; and allow our historians to arrange the retrospect, so that future generations will not guess how infirm of purpose we were at a vital moment; how near the nation might have been to moral disaster. It is possible to fool history; it has been fooled steadily, from the royal annals of the Pharaohs to those of the Hohenzollerns. Wherever the elements of a great story are woven together by the art of the narrator, the unheroic tends to disappear from the narrative. But the history of the present war does not yet belong to the realm of art. We can wait awhile for the epic. Fooling history has little bearing upon the present; but fooling ourselves is a different matter. The worst of all blunders is self-delusion.

### "PATRIOTISM IS NOT ENOUGH"

As a matter of fact we did not solve the problem which the first phase of our war presented—that of securing the direct adherence of a great democracy to a policy which demanded that it make sacrifices for things beyond the clear range of its interest.

In place of a solution, we fell back upon something that did not demand thought, something so primitive and so much a part of our natures as to belong rather to instinct than to ideas—simple, pure loyalty to “Uncle Sam.” The rough mountaineering moonshiner who brought along the gun he used to have ready for government revenue officers, because he thought “Uncle Sam might need him,” was but a more romantic figure in a nation-wide movement. This ancient loyalty, so far as one can see, saved the day, rather than a clarified idea of the reasons for the war.

Valuable as such a sentiment may be, it is not as sound an element of national life to rely upon in a crisis as this experience might lead one to suppose. If the loyalty is unquestioning, it may be deceived; if it questions it may falter. Disaster may front either alternative. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that the disaster of the world war came through the failure to recognize that patriotism itself is not enough. Patriotism unquestioning confers power with irresponsibility upon Government; and out of that finest metal of the soul, in which sacrifice tempers courage, the irresponsible State may forge the weapons of conquest and rapine.

There is little likelihood that we shall follow the example of Germany, the Germany of 1914, and imperil our liberties by excess of loyalty. We have too much of the spirit of independence for that—an independence bred first of the adventure of the frontier, and then impressed upon our character by the opportunities for individual enterprise which go with the opening up of a continent. It is well, to be sure, to be upon our guard on this point, seeing how incredibly an intelligent people like the Germans have surrendered to irresponsible leadership and how careless many of our “best citizens” are of political responsibility. But, in spite of the growth of power in the hands of our executives, state and city as well as federal—a tendency not without its dangers—there remains a healthy attitude of crit

cism toward our officials, which finds sufficient expression to keep the administration continually aware of its proper subordination to the popular will.

The contrast between the attitude of the country toward the President in the opening months of the war with that toward him after the war was over illustrates this point very well indeed. The country supported Mr. Wilson when he went to war, although it had apparently elected him largely in the belief that he would keep us out of it, because the President made it clear that he was closely observant of popular feeling. No one then thought of evoking the ancient safeguards of our Constitution against the tyranny of government; for there is underlying the Constitution itself a sort of "social contract" between government and the people which keeps even a war-president, with all his power, to some degree, a responsive as well as a responsible head of a nation. But popular feeling in war time is a vastly different thing from popular feeling in time of peace. In war time the current flows one way, and, above all, the call for common action is directed towards another State—the enemy is without. In time of peace, diversity of opinion and of policy makes the problem of responsible Presidential leadership distinctly more different—to the point indeed where one may question if it is possible. Divergent views on the major questions of the day may be sustained as earnestly by sections of the country as the principles for which it engages in war. It is this very complexity of the national life, and the variety of its interests, which furnish the chief security against encroachments of power by an Executive. Criticism develops automatically in such a situation, and the American people are nothing, if not critical.

We are not likely soon to imitate the folly of Germany; we are too little given to the discipline of obedience to become subservient. But the other alternative is a real



danger. It is in the guise of "Liberty" that anarchy masquerades. Anarchy itself as an article of faith is far removed from the temperament of the people. There is too strong a belief in the efficiency of the Constitution for such a creed to make much headway. But it is not the formal doctrine of anarchy which is mainly to be feared. It is that simple practice of taking the law into one's own hands, which is almost as distinctively an American element of social practice as bureaucratic regularity is German. Self-help in the relatively unformed societies of the frontier States—where personalities, rather than institutions, embody law and order—was a vastly different thing from the breakdown of institutions in the mature and impersonal society of the business world which moves today. Behind the frontier practices there lay after all, some appreciation of that subtle bond of mutual trust, that social contract which underlies our whole political structure, for the men to whom fell the responsibility of leadership had been bred in communities where the traditions of political life were deeply rooted. On the other hand, the immigrants who have poured in by millions into the country during the last generation have seldom any such background of experience. Their appreciation of liberty is only outwardly the same as that of the older American stock; and there is nothing more difficult to acquire than the sense of balance between self and society, which is the American idea of a free community. The European war—especially in its earlier stages—revealed how many there were in this country who had not yet grasped it. Students in our universities, whose ancestors had suffered under the Czars, interpreted the troubles of our colonial era as though the subjects of George III had faced circumstances almost as distressful as those of Ivan the Terrible. Others recalled the cowed populace of Austria under Metternich. They had no suspicion of the stern insuppressible spirit of the Puritan, or the unsubdued independence of the frontier.

They did not know what constructive freedom means. For such Americans there is no unwritten Constitution which steadies our loyalty by securing our liberties.

Loyalty is the emotion of patriotism; and "patriotism is not enough." The last words of Edith Cavell should ring out as a warning in days like these.

The country is not safe which relies upon patriotism alone to tide it over its crises—and the crises which the war has brought are by no means over.

## TESTS

History shows that the trial of war is always a double one; the hardest test is generally in the readjustment afterward. In the case of most great wars, one can definitely trace this second struggle of society to re-attain the equilibrium of peace. The Hundred Years' War cost France two centuries more of such readjustment. In the thirteenth century French civilization had reached almost the threshold of modern times. It had practically attained the degree of political development which it had three hundred years later when Richelieu organized the administrative structure of today. Between that earlier dawn of politics, that day of Gothic art, when the great medieval cathedrals were building in every busy city, when the University of Paris was begun, when the law courts settled in the royal palace, and lawyers began to rule in the name of even such a king as St. Louis—between that day and the time of Richelieu stretches a story of tragic import. It shows the moral as well as the physical and intellectual decline of a nation under the stress or menace of war. There was the devastation by the bandit-soldiery who helped to win the war for the King, but who learned to defy the royal power once it had become dependent. Then the rival houses of Burgundy, and Armagnac, profiteers of anarchy,

terrorized the land by every crime in the calendar. In the following age, even in the name of religion, the Guises and the Bourbons kept the country in anarchy and ruin. In short, for almost three centuries France made little progress, unable to recover from the effects of one war until its evil consequences had bred another.

German history can offer similar tribute to the blasting after-effects of war. Not to go back to the Middle Ages, so filled with illustrations of the backward, brutalizing nature of the so-called "chivalry", take only the results of the Thirty Years' War, when the strength of Germany was so wasted that it was benumbed for a century, unable to produce a single work of literature worth recording, or at least fit to rank with the great classics in German speech. Whether a nation is bled white or bleeds itself, its loss in vitality is all the same.

It is unnecessary to follow in detail such instances as these. But it is surely pertinent at the close of this war to recall the dark, stifling years of Europe after Waterloo—the mad *revanche* on the part of those whom the Revolution and Empire had dispossessed, the suffering of the helpless poor to which Blue Books bear tragic witness, the foolish suppression of thought by governments still feeling themselves insecure, and the long delay of reform, which the exhausted nations tolerated rather than suffer from another upheaval. History has no surer generalization to offer than that war leaves the gravest issues still to be fought for.

Of these two tests, moreover, it is the second one, that which comes after the fighting is over, which tries our stamina most severely. It is a test of moral character, after all the enthusiasm has been burned out in the war itself. It leaves us to march to our goal with no bands playing, no flags flying, no inspiring comradeship keeping step. The orders are by no means clear; we are left to our own devices and the confusion of divided counsels. Tired out

when we begin, from the exhaustion of the war itself, at a moment when we need every ounce of strength for the new demands upon our energy, we face a crisis of the gravest sort. We have not only to safeguard the issues fought for, but to re-adjust ourselves from the fighting; to take up in the post-war period the problems which have accumulated upon our hands during the period when we had no time to consider them. This is the hardest test which can be set before the nation, and history has so far, in every instance, had to record a measure of defeat. It makes little difference whether a nation has been victorious or vanquished; though the failure is of a different kind. In conquered states, as Machievelli pointed out, seditions arise; but the conquerors suffer hardly less in frustrated ambitions and distorted ideals. The case of our own history after the Civil War is to the point. Not only was there the sad blundering of Reconstruction, in which the temperate statesmanship of Lincoln was lost to sight in the ardor of partisanship, but public office became the spoil of placemen. Soldiers, sometimes but poorly qualified to assume the control of the intricate mechanism of civil government, became the administrators of the nation's business. And that business was at its lowest ebb.

Among the many misleading things that history has been guilty of, there is perhaps nothing worse than that it should have treated war as a purely military event; for the displacement which war causes in the process of civilization is an essential part of war history. And, unless the whole period of reconstruction is measured as part of the event of war itself, we shall never come to any clear understanding of the catastrophe. So long as the actual fighting is in progress, the stimulation of war activities, regardless of cost, brings out a delusive appearance of prosperity in industry and every phase of national production. The pinch comes only with the close of the war, when the forced

markets no longer buy and the process of deflation sets in with its menace of bankruptcy. This is more than an economic fact, for in the uncertainties of a declining market there is little foothold for altruism and high ideals. With hardship and unemployment brought to one's door, the interests of the world outside grow more and more remote. It is a notable fact that where the sense of insecurity, economic or political, dominates in national outlook, there is little chance for enlightened statesmanship. Insecurity raises at once the question of self-interest and self-interest under such circumstances quickly passes over into pure, unenlightened selfishness. This is a vicious circle, for selfishness almost invariably defeats its own ends. It may be as much an enemy of public welfare in dictating policies of aloofness and protected isolation as in the more obvious and aggressive form of economic imperialism. Indeed it is doubtful whether withdrawal from international co-operation in the avenues of trade at a time when it is most needed is not a greater impediment to recovery than participation prompted by the hope of gain. In any case both policies are likely to unmask the unlovely forms of national greed in the unhealthy atmosphere of post-war days.

The sense of insecurity is also responsible to some extent for a tendency for one aspect of war itself to be prolonged after the fighting is over. Militarism has come to the fore for something like a generation after every great war in history. Military heroes tend to monopolize the political scene, often ill-equipped for the problems of the peaceful life. This is not simply due to hero-worship, as has been so lightly assumed. It also springs from a sense of the uncertainties of disturbed international relations and the unsettled state of society at home. Where the ordered processes of civilization seem ineffective, people turn to those strong and forceful characters who will not hesitate in time of crisis. Militarism (including navalism) is a

short cut to safety. Like selfishness, it is dangerous in proportion as it lives upon fear and the sense of insecurity; for, so war tends to perpetuate itself.

More serious than the growth of militarism, however, is the failure of liberalism, a failure which seems inevitably to follow war. If there ever was a time when forward-looking, constructive liberalism was needed, it is surely in times like these. For liberalism offers a solvent to those problems which arise when new and old forces meet; it is the mediating force between the conservative appreciation of what society has already achieved and the impatience of radicalism over what is left undone. It registers the constant adjustment of the social structure to the play and counterplay of policies or facts. It is a strange paradox that a movement which has this element of compromise in its very make up seems to acquire in time of war the unadjustable character of the doctrinaire, holding to its ideals of progress and reform in spite of impossible conditions, blind to expediency and to the interests of the state. The result has been its own discomfiture and the resultant lessening of the adjustability of society to the needs of the day.

This eclipse of liberalism is perhaps best seen in the way in which the two ideals of nationalism and liberty have thrown aside the restraints of responsibility and become an explosive force of decentralization and chaos. It is a hard blow to liberals to see the smaller people of mid-Europe, for whose freedom the allies fought, endangering the heritage of a thousand years of European culture by erecting impassable frontiers and cherishing behind them more of ancient, tribal hatred than of a sense of that world citizenship in whose name their liberties were evoked. Self-determination proved to be a most dangerous shibboleth, and to lend itself in the hands of immature peoples to the most grotesque demands of sovereignty.

Finally, the menace most in evidence, the Revolutionary movement of radicalism, is perhaps less menacing by itself than as a result of the others. In the period of deflation there is likely to be more suffering by the working class than protest. Unemployment brings a sense of helplessness rather than of belligerency. But, if the situation is not intelligently met and only oppressive measures are taken when protests do arrive, we shall all suffer for it. Whatever happens in America it is well to recognize that Bolshevism is but the extravagant aspect of the most profound change that European society has undergone since 1789, when France threw off the structure of the Middle Ages. Whatever we may think of it, the proletariat in every country there has been watching with deepest interest the spectacle of the docile, ignorant peasantry of Russia arousing itself to what has been hailed as the vastest socialistic experiment ever brought to the verge of reality. Even while discounting the success of that experiment and refusing to enlist in the Third International at the behest of Lenine, the leaders of revolution in the western area can still command large forces of their own, and if no outlet is offered through the agencies which the State supplies, they will sooner or latter bring disorders within it.

The menace in this movement is less in America than in older and more organized societies, for this country is still, upon the whole, the land of opportunity. If, however, opportunity should be unduly curtailed, the tide of revolt piles up behind the impediments and bursts out in strikes, in riots, and in the danger of civil war. That very spirit of independence in our democracy, to which reference has been made, makes ever ready an insubordination and defiance of constituted authority, and lends to our labor troubles a peculiarly sinister aspect.

So far we have attempted to meet this situation armed with little else than the emotion of patriotism. We have struck instinctively rather than intelligently at radicalism,

failing to see that there must be something more substantial in the faith of our democracy than mere reliance upon the old-fashioned loyalty to "Uncle Sam," if it is to be proof against the allurements of the demagogue. For the world has so lost its moorings, that the distant illusive shores of Utopia sometimes seem almost in sight; and well-meaning, earnest men are ready to risk even ship-wreck to reach them. High aspirations are not infrequently the cause of disaster. And if the breath of the new day, which has given life to aspirations for world democracy, stirs as well the embers of a revolt against the whole social structure, no simple emotions of patriotism will be proof against it as it bursts into flame. There must be something more than loyalty to old traditions in our citizenship. Apart from the fact that great numbers of our citizens have no share in those traditions, the ideal of international solidarity along the lines of economic interest seems, to many, a sounder principle of society than that of the old-fashioned patriotism.

Socialism cannot be disposed of by emotions. The test of war has shown that some of the constructive features of its program have been adapted to suit the needs of most of the European States. It is no longer a mere philosophy of doctrinaires; it is one of the real facts of a very real world. National oversight and control of public utilities is a policy with very elastic possibilities of application. The problem is one to be faced and studied intelligently, not left to prejudice and impulse to decide. The extension of Government control over the economic machinery of the modern world is a process so general and so insistently demanded that, whether one names it socialism or not, it is one of the most decisive features of political life today. The more one watches this development, however, the more one sees how poor and frail a thing is mere patriotic emotion to steady our democracy in the face of the experiments which it seems sure to try, and to save it from the folly of extremes.



## A NATION'S INTELLIGENCE

We have talked about preparedness, but the best defences are still unprovided. The strongest weapon in a nation's armory is intelligence; its most formidable force is knowledge under control. If these are not available, we are unprepared for emergencies. The only safety for democracy, faced as it is with sudden crises, is to arm itself with facts as definitely as with navies and armies. Yet this has never been done, in any adequate way.

The only arming of intelligence with which the nation concerns itself as a whole, is that of little children. At the age of thirteen or fourteen, over eighteen million of the nineteen and a half million children in our schools close their books of history and geography, their readers and grammars and go out to make a living. That is a young nation in itself—more than twice the size of the entire population of Ireland and Scotland, almost as large as the mass of nations once under the crown of Hungary, and not much less than all the Prussians in Prussia. And it never gets beyond the elementary grades.

Out of the nineteen and a half million in the primary schools, a million and a half are privileged to go to high schools and academies; but our colleges, professional schools and universities, for all that is spent upon them, both by private endowment and large state grants, are attended by only about 275,000 students. By the age of twenty-one, about 95 per cent of our young men and women are through with the process of education. Some 4 per cent (of those of that age) are still—presumably—studying. This is the extent of our formal attempt to prepare the nation's surest defense—its intelligence.

There is little use, however, in our deploring, such as inadequate return. For no amount of theorizing or benevolence will change the facts. They depend upon the inexorable laws of economics. Most of the boys and girls—the

eighteen millions or so—who leave school between the ages of twelve and fourteen do so because they have to earn money or help others to earn it. The only way to secure a longer and a better chance for our future citizens, is to revise, not the curriculum, but the economic system. And that is a task we are not likely to undertake—in any national way—for the present.

But given things as they are, taking the country as it is—not a bad starting point, after all—can anything be done to reach the eighty millions of grown up men and women who are the citizens of today? How can we arm their intelligence with facts? This is the most important single question facing the country today.

The future belongs to the nation that learns to bring its intelligence to the great task of developing rather than destroying natural resources, of maintaining its place in the world without robbing either its own future or the present of others. Waste in production and in war must be eliminated; otherwise we are within sight of the collapse of civilization. Yet, to judge by the utterances in press and on the platform, we are still content to bring to such problems, not the intelligence and informed constructive minds which might solve them, but emotions, prejudices and ignorance. This is partly the blighting effect of war upon us; partly the result of never having had to think along these lines, because nature in America has been so prodigal. But the day is at hand when we must measure up with the rest of the world, and either, by reckless competition for new materials and markets, force along once more that process of destructive production which awakens national animosities and kindles war, or by more far-sighted policies conserve the resources and the peace of the world at the same time. It is not easy, in the situation which the war has brought, to preserve the clear vision which the latter policies demand. Thwarted ambition on the part of our late enemies, and pressing need on the part of our friends,

imperil the economic equilibrium of the world. But a deeper reading of history than politicians, or men of affairs seem able to devote to it, will show that whatever flag floats over the strategic highways and markets of the world, the real control will pass to those who bring to Mesopotamia or Zanzibar the irresistible power of modern science, backed by capital and supported by intelligence.

To most people in this country these things seem far removed from American interests. But they are part and parcel of our business world, and hence of our national interests. We have already learned that henceforth the seas we sail must be considered as much a concern of our national life as the railroads which cross our plains. We could no more allow the U-boat murderer to remain at large on the sea than the bandit on the township side-road. We have learned this first lesson in world citizenship. But it is a long step from that to a realization that we are interested in the peaceful traffic as well. A southern planter who hardly knows whether Turkestan is in Asia or Africa may find that its irrigated fields some day have displaced his cotton in the markets of Europe. In the past such things have not mattered much to us; but we are from now on a much more intimate part of the great world organism. In the past we were content to leave such "business" in the hands of an aristocracy of business intelligence. But from now on we need to distinguish between the management of business, which is a matter for technical and specialized business men, and the implications and effect of it upon society, which is a matter of general concern. There must be found a way to interest the general public in its own larger interests. It should be possible just as much for policies of peace as for those of war. Unless we do, our enterprises will be thwarted, their purposes challenged and even the just profits expropriated. The mass of the population must be shown how its welfare is involved. The stockholders of the great Co-operative Wholesale Stores of

England know that the few shillings or pounds of shares they own, make them partners in the spice islands and distant shipping which that great corporation owns, as well as in the factories and warehouses at home. We may not try any such co-operative experiments, but we must secure a common interest in the enterprise of American business.

The only way to achieve this result is to educate the eighty million grown-up citizens of this country. The stimulus of war has taught them much—enough, perhaps to meet the war-emergency. But when that stimulus ceases to act, and the slump comes which, as we have seen, has followed every great war known in history, have we any ground for hoping that we shall be able to direct our politics intelligently? Almost nineteen-twentieths of our vast population has had no schooling beyond the age of fourteen. It has forgotten most of the lessons it learned in those days of childhood. It is living in the narrow routine of factory, farm or home work. The tragedy of war demands of it the sacrifice of lives in the fight for great principles which all may understand; but in time of peace its energies, like its prejudices, are confined to the little world of daily experiences. Yet, upon the unformed judgment of these farmers and villagers, these ignorant workers in our mines and on our railways, rests the responsibility of determining the success of our policies in the most decisive era in the history of the world! This is not theory, but sober fact. The issues are brought home to us as surely as the German army brought the guns to Rheims. Our complacent isolation is shattered for all time. And we are facing this portentous fact with the unconcern of ignorance and the chance instruments of the old régime.

What is to be done about it? Two lines of action naturally suggest themselves. On the one hand, to proceed by temporary expedient, on the other to apply some permanent, preventive remedy.

In the present war, the nation found itself by the extensive use of temporary and specific devices. Newspapers and magazines adjusted themselves to the new demands, and found in the vast tragedy of the war a sufficient substitute for the chronicle of scandal or of amusement. But, invaluable as these proved, they are in their very nature most unreliable guides. Articles were prepared over-night by publicists who turned from describing millionaires' weddings to the work of elucidating German Kultur—a product of centuries and as intricate as the life of a nation. It is true that the newspapers for once tried to secure the help of historians and economists and men familiar with European affairs. But their articles were as like as not to be sandwiched in between irresponsible narratives from the untrained imagination of former city reporters. Yet it must be admitted that our journalists, with all their natural limitations, did exceedingly well in the war, and the country at large learned from them how to make up its mind.

But even at best, a newspaper is a thing of the passing day. Yesterday's paper is already in the waste-basket. The best of articles by the most competent of men have no permanence in such a medium. This was not of much importance in the careless days before the war, when we could pass from one interest to another without troubling our memories unduly over past events. But those careless days were over. In August 1914, and again in April 1917, we entered upon a new era, and developed a new temper. We wanted to keep the best explanations of the best authorities. Numberless scrap-books were begun. Libraries enlarged their files. Everyone was conscious of the importance of having the new information for reference, since there was too much for anyone to remember it all. Some newspapers saw in this need a chance to reprint their leading contributions in the form of magazines. The magazines, however, were but one degree less fragile than the newspapers, and soon the reader forgot where the articles

were to be found in them, and they too went to the wastebasket.

In addition to the changed contents of periodicals there was an entirely new output in books. Serious treatises on international law for a brief time, became "best sellers," though what their untrained readers made of some of them it is hard to say. Governments at war published in the guise of information a vast amount of propaganda. Altogether the reading world was overwhelmed with a bewildering amount of war literature. But once the local situation had changed, these temporary devices for the information of the masses proved no longer of interest, and since, owing to their form and specific use, they were commonly treated as tools to be applied for a single time, they and their contents were rapidly forgotten, once the situation which called them forth had passed away.

What was needed was something more permanent: a stimulus toward an attitude of mind upon which one could rely, and a mastery of a body of fact which would not pass away at the first turn of events. In short, democracy needs preventive medicine rather than temporary remedies for crises.

## APPLIED POLITICAL SCIENCE

The conclusion is clear. There must be economic reform, adjusting society to its changing environment; there must be reform in education, extending its scope and revising its program of studies. But in addition, building partly upon these, partly independent of them, there must be a new development in the social and political sciences. If there is to be intelligent foresight in national questions, we must get rid of our careless habits of "muddling through" and give up working our governments by rule of thumbs. In short, we must apply scientific methods to the management of society as we have been learning to apply them in the natural world.

It never seems to occur to one that there is anything strange in the fact that we have better equipment for studying electricity than for studying society. But as a matter of fact, our whole attitude changes when we turn from the physical sciences to investigating ourselves. The laboratories for social measurements have hardly been fitted up. We are in the political sciences where the natural scientists were two hundred years ago. We have no sure way for knowing a fact when we see one; no instruments for determining its force in the great stream of events which make up history. While the physical and chemical sciences have gone ahead and remade our universe and thrown aside the medieval theories which restricted their free investigation of realities, in the fields of the political sciences there have been no such triumphs to record either in creative products or in the mastery over hampering prejudices and preconceived opinions. The very word "opinion" can hardly be used in the physical sciences, for it would ill describe the processes of experiment. This is not to imply that the successive statements of results which the sciences issue, and which become the basis of our world-view, are final and absolute truth. There is a temporary element in them all, a guess or hypothesis, as in all human reasoning. But between such statements of the evidences furnished in the laboratory and the casual "opinions" on social and national questions furnished by press, pulpit or platform there is all the difference that lies between a Kelvin or an Einstein, measuring the forces of the universe, and a Babylonian astrologer messing in star-portents and dreams.

We can see this relative backwardness of the political sciences by a glance at the three major divisions of history, economics and anthropology.

History, although much improved of late, is still largely a repository of untested data. Not that the things may not have happened which it records, but that their happen-

ing was often not an event of the measurement assigned it by a casual, pre-scientific judgment. The accepted perspectives of the past are largely chance perspectives, or the reflection of uninformed opinions of other times, which have never been questioned critically. Take as a single example the fact that the French Revolution was not really understood by historians for a hundred years after it had happened; when at last, a concentrated effort of scientific critical minds, re-examining the data, remade the story. Much of what is taught as history is still in the unsifted state that the history of France was in before this re-appraisal by critical scholarship. Above all, modern history is but a monastic tale so long as it deals only with the traditional theme of debate in council or the clash of war. The greatest events in modern history are surely those connected with science itself, mastering not only abstruse problems of phenomena, but the very basis of civilization, in the control of time and space and of the productivity of nature. It is surely a fact of history that farming is becoming applied chemistry, so that the farmer replaces a primitive superstition about the luck of the moon at planting, with an interest in nitrates in the soil, and so escapes the fetters of that immemorial conservatism which has characterized the country people of the past. It is a fact of history that machinery, in supplanting hands, is not only creating cities but dislocating the balance of power between nations far more effectively than the old diplomacy was ever able to do. The whole history of civilization must be re-examined in the light of scientific analysis, to see what data really matter, and to eliminate mere tradition based on chance or nourished by prejudice.

But, the student of history will at once protest that not too much can be expected from scientific methods in his field, for our view of the past is never more than a reflection of our views of the present. We inject into history the major interests of our own time; if our interest is theology,



our history will be theological; if our interest is politics, our history will be political. The relative correctness of our view of the past will therefore depend upon what clarity of vision we may be able to achieve concerning other matters than history.

This brings us to economics, the science of things as they are supposed to be, in society at large. Now economics has been, like history, more or less of a guess at what things are, or a succession of guesses registered by men of genius of great learning, but none of them supplied with an adequate apparatus for measuring the larger forces which modify or control society. It is no disparagement to those rare leaders in either economics or history, "the old masters," to whom we owe the little insight we possess in such matters, if we frankly admit that their speculations are now chiefly of interest to the historian of thought rather than to the investigator of data. New instruments, new methods; and fortunately, new instruments are at hand.

It is the same with anthropology as with economics. The comparative study of mankind and of the elements of society has only recently passed out of the stage of crude conjecture and haphazard methods. Little enough has yet been done, but already a whole group of scientific allies are growing up to work together upon the tangled problems of social development, sciences of language, philology; of remains, archæology; of religion and magic, comparative religion; of mental traits and capacity, comparative and social psychology; of social phenomena in higher forms, sociology. The combined attack of these new inquisitors upon the age-long misconceptions as to the fundamentals of the human side of the problem is bound to match the achievements of economics on the more material side.

Whatever the contribution which these sciences offer, however, we come back to the point that they have done nothing yet comparable with the work of the physical sciences. They are hardly more than a commentary on

matters that lie beyond their power to affect or control. The anthropologist and the historian, for instance, can point out the primitive elements in the emotion of patriotism, of which we have spoken frequently here; but where is there any evidence of the effect of such clarified thinking upon the emotion itself? Indeed so ineffective, upon the whole, have the political and social sciences remained, that there is a general skepticism in the sciences themselves as to whether they can ever be anything else but ineffective. But this conclusion rests upon false premises. It takes for granted, though none too clearly, that the social sciences are *pure sciences* and not *applied sciences*; that their proper purpose is the search for truth, and that they would be deflected from their true course if set to work in the play and counterplay of the crude forces of actual society. The dominant school of history for the last generation so prized the objectivity it was able to attain, that it never would risk using it in dangerous places, like the events of one's own time. Economics, the one science that has devoted its attention to more practical tasks, has that much more to its credit. Generally speaking, we do not expect much of the social sciences because we do not believe that it lies within their proper scope to master their phenomena as the applied sciences do.

Now, this is the crux of the whole matter. What we need is *applied* social science. We need to have something happen in politics, for instance, comparable to what happened in chemistry when Bessemer set his steel converter to work. We must learn to deal with social facts as Watt dealt with steam. Or to take a more pertinent illustration, we must work at the data of national problems in the same spirit as that which Pasteur applied to the investigations which changed the study of medicine from quackery to science.

Such an insistence on applied science does not imply

that pure political or social science, the study of truth for its own sake, would suffer, any more than it has suffered in the physical, chemical or biological field. On the contrary, out of the vast laboratory of experience which such a plan as this involves, would come a truer vision of things as a whole and as they are. Pure science is but the overtone of applied science; its poetry and its philosophy.

But just what does this all mean in terms of practice; and, more especially, how does it offer any promise of solving the pressing problem of the development of the nation's intelligence by a growing mastery of fact and a corresponding decline in prejudice?

The promise lies in democracy itself. Nowhere else is there a greater demand for facts, for intelligent mastery of data, than where it is most needed—in those sections of the working classes where the pressure of daily need shows with stern reiteration how much the times are out of joint. This is a patent but strangely ignored characteristic of democracy—its appetite for facts. We are constantly warned of the contrary tendencies; of the theoretical revolutionary, and the fickle whims of the mob. But the hold of the theorist on his audiences is frequently due less to his theories than to his command of facts and his ability to present them so that they reach home in the consciousness of those who face them so closely day by day. And the fickleness of popular opinion is not seldom due to the repeated discovery that what has been dressed up as fact turns out to be untrue. Radical literature does not win its way, as many conservatives seem to think, by presenting only dreams of a metaphysical economic heaven, where capitalists cease from troubling, and the elect co-operate. Its driving power lies rather less in its imaginative projections of Utopia than in its criticism of things as they are, which everyone can recognize. In short, the moments of thought and opinion, which stir the world of every day, are as dependent upon fact as the policies of state with

which they deal. And there is more sense of reality in them than we can appreciate unless we come upon the facts from the same angle.

Behind the popular outlook lie two great imperatives: the need for adjustment to changing environment—a biological as well as an economic fact, a law of life itself—and a powerful instinct, curiosity. It was curiosity which supplied the impulse for science and produced history by way of gossip. It implants in us all a tendency so strong that we are prepared to run almost any risk and pay almost any price to satisfy it. Here is something to build upon surely. Moreover, it is not to our disadvantage that we are most curious about what concerns us most, giving our little home affairs precedence over larger events that happen to others. For, out of this self-interest, intelligence can forge the instruments for our social preservation.

Here, then is where the applied sciences of politics and society must be set to work; not in the isolation of academic life, which may properly remain philosophic rather than practical, and so contribute that influence which pure thought possesses on the actions of men; but in the very heart of the work-a-day world. Facts must be supplied where the need for them is greatest; and a scientific spirit must be developed where its operation would be most effective. How can this be done? The full answer cannot be given, for it is the quality of science to belie all forecasts; but enough of the process is already going in our midst to indicate some, at least, of the possible lines of procedure.

There exist, chiefly in the world of business, offices devoted to the investigation of the facts pertinent to the enterprises undertaken. Businesses which depend most upon long foresight, use them most, such as banks or great corporations. During the war, government departments found it necessary to develop them to a large degree; and

the term they became known by there—Intelligence Departments, aptly characterizes the stimulus they were to supply as well as the scope of their work. Their function is to investigate and report on the data on which policies rest. Their activity depends not less on the use made of their work than on the work itself; for no investigator can keep his heart in this work unless he knows that it is being applied to actual problems. But so far the use has been a narrow one, simply to help offices transact their business. In almost all cases, and even more so, in Government offices, the information analyzed is for those few who are on the inside; it becomes a business or a department secret. It would surely be a step towards the science of applied politics if such devices, as they become perfected and test out their capacity for fact-analysis, should also enlarge the scope of their application to include citizens generally.

At once, however, we come upon two fundamental objections. In the first place, facts are not simple matters of description. They are variable and elusive and very hard to establish, and no two investigators are likely to agree in all details in their reports. In the second place, it would deaden curiosity and not stimulate that criticism which is the first requisite of intelligent citizenship, if a government Intelligence Service were to offer to do a nation's thinking for it! We do not want a German bureaucracy dulling our judgment by its very efficiency.

The only way to avoid these two obstacles is to challenge authority by as "authoritative" data in the hands of an opposition; and to profit from controversy about facts to enlarge our notions of them. If, for instance, instead of leaving Intelligence Work for the Government on the one hand, or specific business interests on the other, the Political Parties were themselves to undertake it, and so direct their appeal, not to prejudice and emotion, where they make it now, but to knowledge and insight, it would

contribute enormously to steady and elevate the political outlook of the country.

## PARTIES AND PREJUDICES

The place "party" occupies in modern politics is a strange one. Although in every country that has developed popular government, that development has been reached by way of parties, they themselves have remained undeveloped, and are perhaps the most primitive elements in our political life. So far as the mass of the nation is concerned they furnish little more than an instrument for intermittent use at elections. Between elections, it is true, they still function through the agencies of representative government; but to keep them working in any other way seems to most people illegitimate. A tacit social agreement exists for minimizing their action; and those who use them between elections are labelled as "politicians,"—a word of ill-omen.

This may be partly due to the healthy feeling that party government is something better than its premises; that those elected as representatives of party, once elected, become the representatives of the nation; and that any attempt to hold them to the narrowing influences of party ties is a sinister movement to void that implied "social contract" to which we referred above, which safeguards the rights of the minority in the body politic. With this sense of enlarged responsibility which widens the outlook of legislators from politics to statecraft one must, of course, be careful not to interfere. But while the governments founded upon party may profit from an escape from the machinery which secured their election, it is an entirely different question what the electorate should do. For them, released as they are from all responsibility for action, except at elections, escape from party means generally entire abstention from *any* further political activity whatever.

Now, it is just this abstention which makes the party such an anomaly. If it touches the electorate only at election times, it naturally plays upon those more permanent traits of national character upon which it can base some hope of a successful appeal. And these more permanent elements, if the nation is left to itself and faces issues uninformed, are prejudices and emotions instead of reason. The result is a vicious circle; an uninformed electorate tends to perpetuate an uninforming political machine. Is there no escape from this dilemma?

The first condition of success is not to expect too much. There is no use planning a new heaven and a new earth by way of any one line of endeavor; and what is proposed here, although sufficiently far-reaching in its own field, is after all but a slight affair compared with the stubborn continuing realities of national habit and outlook. Most people are either too busy or too indolent to take much consistent interest in problems which do not on the face of them bear directly upon their own lives. A thoroughly alert electorate in immediate touch with scientifically directed political parties is quite as unreal a Utopia as any ever dreamed of. But there is a practical middle course between the crude, almost anarchic conditions which prevail today, and the achievement of ideals. The clue to it has been offered by a singular and wide-spread movement at the present time, which is just beginning to engage the attention of political observers, that which, under one form is known as group-action in politics; under another, as direct action. We must see if party-organization can profit from the experience of these movements.

The ineffectiveness of party organization, reflected in representative government which rests upon it, has led to a line of action upon the part of those interested in certain policies, which has cut in upon the processes of that government to an extent unknown by the citizens at large. Groups

which are intent upon securing or preventing government action organize themselves to bring pressure to bear upon legislatures or administrations. They may use the lines which lead to lobbies and more or less corrupt influences, or they may content themselves with the effort to stir the electorate to use its influence through the mails. In most cases they claim to "keep out of politics" by keeping out of political parties, having only specific points to gain, and not a continuous policy to advance. The play and counterplay of these "influences" is perhaps as determining a factor in our governmental action today as the elections themselves. Some observers are inclined to go farther, and to say that the center of political forces lies in such group action rather than in the older parties which do little but supply it with the arena and the nominal protagonists. It invades the executive as well as the legislative bodies, deciding for presidents, even when elected by huge majorities, who shall hold portfolios of state. Reformers, business men, labor leaders and farmers, all classes or groups that are large enough or important enough to become nationally articulate, use such action whenever their interests are at stake; for it is their only way of reaching those "in power"—a power achieved through party action at the polls.

This growth of group action may, as some suppose, be reaching such dimensions as to offer a substitute for the ineffectiveness of party politics, called out by the growing complexity of modern society. And if the test is to be made between the old party structure, limited to election campaigns, and these groups representative of the larger functional units of the nation, the group action is sure to grow in proportion as these groups express the coherent view of their own constituents. But before such a tendency becomes really dominant, it is well to see how much of the needs which have called it out can be met by readjusting the formal political organization which we already possess, that of the party.



If parties are solely for election purposes—apart from their rôle in legislatures or executives—then it is clear that we shall have to look elsewhere, more and more, for guidance in crises. The problems of statecraft do not come only at election times; new ones arise constantly, involving issues unforeseen and unforeseeable. We may, in the old theory of representative government, say that our legislators are left free to meet them in our stead; but where our interests are involved deeply enough we do not in practice leave our representatives free. And every such interference as we bring to bear, tends to disorganize the institutions we outwardly regard as the very structure of the state. There are only two alternatives; either the parties must become better and more constant media for expressing the will of the people, more adjustable functions of the body politic; or they will be less and less effective in securing us a working government. Since, however, they still remain, in popular esteem, the chief political agency of the people, it surely requires no further argument to justify an attempt to use them, if we can, to cure their own ills.

How, then, can parties become less these dead-and-alive organs of tradition and prejudice which they have so largely been, and more educational with regard to the electorate and functional with regard to the government? The answer has already been suggested in the foregoing pages. By studying facts.

## PARTIES AND FACTS

If, alongside of campaign committees and the other existing party organs, there were a national committee, articulated with a series of local committees, whose duty it was to find out the facts in those matters upon which the party must in any case have an opinion, what would be the possibilities of such a mechanism? Its value at election

times is already recognized, for such temporary committees now exist; but a well organized permanent organization, with its capital already largely available in the shape of well-ordered reference files would enormously increase the efficiency of the present devices. Apart from elections, however, it could supply legislators with data for debate and party leaders with the means for criticizing opponents or better weighing current issues. By the sheer advantage which it could offer over those who lacked the facts, it would justify itself as a part of the party machine.

But, beyond that, it would help to restore confidence in the honesty of political leadership. Frankly admitting the partisan use to which its conclusions would be put, it could still ensure thoroughness in research, knowing that any mistake in fact would be detected and pilloried by the committees of the other side. Thus, partisanship would be reduced more and more to the field of inferences; and the public mind could reach a fairer judgment as to the real merits of the case.

It needs no argument to prove the value of such a device to both nation and party. A few examples, however, may serve to indicate how it might work. Suppose the proposition were made by a government to protect the property of its nationals in some relatively backward country. This seems like a somewhat simple proposition, but it may prove of the gravest importance. The World War sprang from one not much unlike it. Questions of national honor are at once involved. These, in turn, rapidly stimulate patriotic emotions. In spite of a dozen Bryan treaties, this country is as likely as any other, not to wait and weigh the issue. In such a crisis, only a knowledge of the facts can effectively safeguard the nation from unredeemable blunders—and blunders in such matters are invariably crimes—in either failing in its duty to its own citizens or committing acts of aggression in the name of justice. The peace of the world depends to a large degree upon fuller knowledge.

Had the Austrian cabinet known what Berchthold knew but concealed from it, that the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand was not instigated from Serbia, the war might have been averted.

There are, of course, many questions which cannot be solved this way. Any committee of research which set out to answer everything would soon make itself ridiculous. It is not proposed to substitute professors for statesmen. There is such a thing as political insight; and there are men of genius who reach just conclusions by something approaching intuition. Pedantry is no substitute for common sense. But common sense itself can be applied to the elimination of pedantry from such a plan. Properly delimited and articulated to its uses, a Research Department should form a part of every well-ordered political party's household.

The experiment here proposed is not a new one. As a matter of fact, the nearest approach to what is here suggested, is the Labor Research Department maintained in connection with the British Labor movement. It, in turn, owes its initiation to Fabian Socialism; but there is a wide difference between the specific purposes of socialist study-groups or research committees, and the open and free analysis of all kinds of questions which come within the purview of such a miscellaneous body as our old-line political party. Socialist debaters have long enjoyed the advantage of this superior piece of mechanism—a little section of the co-operative commonwealth, which they themselves have created, but their activity is rather to be classed with that of those groups mentioned above, whose action is less through than across the existing state-mechanism. The great political parties lack that coherence and singleness of purpose which characterizes socialism; they are less organs of a doctrine and more humanly complex. Hence the British party is more akin. For it concerns itself with national policies as such, and not simply with the achievement of a labor-state.

The Labor Research Department is therefore an interesting institution to study. It attempts to answer questions of fact (as well as to suggest policy) in all matters which affect the nation, since it holds that the interests of labor are as large as those of the nation itself. This breadth of view may of course be interpreted two ways; but, without going into the question as to whether Labor is enhancing its class to cover the nation or simply losing its own narrowness, the fact remains that we have here substantially a national political party using a research mechanism in the way described. Its reference files contain tabulated and statistical material on all kinds of questions; tariffs, British trade in Africa, opium traffic, reparations, mandates, colonial policies, etc. Its staff, largely voluntary—for its funds are so slight that it can hardly exist without help—is drawn from the ranks of trained investigators and technical experts, mostly college men and women, who can be set upon special tasks of investigation as the demand arises. Any opinions it expresses are edited by committees with an eye to the facts; it is as near applied political science as the limitations of party machinery permit. The result is beyond expectation. It was largely by means of this device—which is not solely monopolized by the Research Department—that the pronouncements of British Labor on world policies have, during the last few years, attracted such attention on the part of thinking people the world over, by their rare breadth of view and control of fact. While the older parties have sometimes seemed to be floundering in the anarchy of thought which comes from a break-down of their ancient shibboleths, unable to proceed further than the expediency of the day requires—in short, “muddling through” and hardly knowing whither—British labor has managed to impress so competent an observer as Lord Haldane, as being “on the heights.” One may utterly disagree with its conclusions, but it at least forces its opponents to meet fact with fact in the great battle of

argument. And from this sort of controversy, if from any, truth emerges.

If industrial democracy can, so early in the day, show such results from applied research, still greater results should follow the co-ordination and development of the agencies for research which the great middle class possesses—but ordinarily fails to use, except for profit. But to do so, one would have to be ready to bring to the problems not only an adequate mechanism but also a free, critical but receptive mind. The progress made by labor toward clarification of the issues which front it is partly due to the fact that it largely lacks that sense of proprietorship in existing society which makes even outworn institutions sentimentally valuable to those whose heritage they have been. There is therefore a better chance for the development of a critical attitude in the newer political forces than in the old. But those who claim a sense of responsibility for things as they are must maintain the balance in the state by meeting criticism with fact.

It may be objected, from the practical side, that a research organization in connection with our traditional parties would not have as definite a purpose as those working with the radical movements. The two great parties are both miscellanies, whereas the newer parties have a narrower platform. To have anything approaching, an applied science of politics, there should be not merely an analysis of facts, but co-ordinated and directed criticism, related definitely to policies. This would not be easy. It might be best, therefore, to attempt a little less at first; and simply propose to study those problems which are novel in American politics, to co-ordinate the outlook of specialists, such as engineers or economists, with those of practical statesmen, and so, by enlarging the premises, secure increasing breadth as well as sobriety of judgment.

## THE ALTERNATIVES

If the old parties continue to meet their problems by the old-time methods and refuse to employ more adequate agencies for securing efficiency in government, there are alternatives which it requires no gift of prophecy to foretell. There will be an acceleration of the growth of that group-action in politics referred to above; and, along the same lines but still more disruptive of the existing scheme of things, a development of direct action by which sections of the community will attempt to achieve their ends by ignoring the machinery of representative government altogether.

The first of these alternatives is more or less inevitable in any case. The only question is how far it will go to replace or nullify the party-structure of government. Within due limits, there is nothing but benefit to all concerned from research committees maintained by private organizations. Farmers, as well as bankers, should be able to make their demands not only more articulate, but also more consistent with public welfare. But if the process is unduly encouraged, through the absence of any more general sifting of evidence by expert hands, the result will be a discrediting of political action; chaotic administration will respond to inconsistency in policy, and the way will lie open to that next step in disintegration, direct action. If those parts of a community who know how their interests are at stake succeed in imposing their will upon the representatives of the whole community, who do not know how its interests are affected, there is in operation a revolutionary change in politics which threatens to transform the very nature of the state. For it is a process which is not likely to stop at legislative and executive action; its invasion of the courts as well is just as inevitable. Subtly but surely, those who know what they want will devise the

way to get it, if they meet on the other hand, only befuddlement and good intentions.

For the present, the employment of adequate means to express the point of view of different sections of the country on specific questions is something to be grateful for, rather than to fear. In the absence of more widely representative committees of research, we must, in self-defense, call for all the information which each technical body can supply. Our safety lies in calling in experts of more than one such body and weighing their statements. We must spend more and more time in hearings, and leave conclusions largely to semi-official and official boards.

This is a process which is likely to grow in any case. But if it grows by itself, without a parallel development in the unofficial, but nation-wide political bodies, it promises to produce new organs of government—some of which are already in but thinly disguised operation. We shall have government by quasi-judicial action of commissions. Such commission government is probably a needed adjunct to our present system; but it is well to be aware of its implications. For, if allowed just a little more scope, it will bring along a new American bureaucracy. And bureaucracy means a lessening of responsible government.

There is an easy optimism in democracies; that things will come out all right in the end. It combines readily with a belief that our political structure is the happy product of long experience, and therefore adequate. But history leads to no such complacent conclusions. The past is full of fools' paradises. The price of liberty is more than constant vigilance; there is no virtue in merely being alert. The most alert may be the most mistaken if snap-judgments and quick action are the criteria of alertness. And if liberty demands foresight, much more so does welfare. No nation can live off its political heritage; for that is something that wastes in all but the most experienced

hands. The processes of history are long; and we are in their midst, not at the close.

But if the issues before us gain in clarity when seen in their true perspectives, they gain in significance when seen in their application to the present. Politics no longer touches the outer fringe of daily life. Every household is affected by it. Our problem, viewed nationally, is to give direction and cohesion to this vast but relatively inarticulate power of public opinion. Viewed from the standpoint of the individual, it is to secure a larger measure of intelligent interest in these things.

The fact that we are in the midst of historic processes instead of at their close, is after all a cheering one. Whatever happens to such schemes as these, it is well to realize what can be done. Reform in politics, one way or another, must keep pace with educational and economic reforms. The political and social sciences, which never before our day have been called upon to meet the world problems of democracy, must work out their methods by experiment. That suggested here is but one of many. But some day it should be possible to treat quackery in politics, as we have learned—only in our own time—to treat it in medicine, and brand the demagogue as a charlatan. This does not call for any change in human nature. The ancient virtues could still operate. Patriotism would still stir the same sentiments as it has always done, and the old ardor of attachment to immemorial things continue to glow. Impulse will long continue to make a stronger appeal than intelligence. But the disciplines of science could be applied to society as elsewhere—not left in academic desuetude—in order to prevent even the best impulses in the world from beclouding the issues. For some of these issues may be vital for civilization itself.



## DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL MORALITY\*

The generalizations of history are seldom of interest to the reformer, for the simple reason that they usually stand in his way. But there is one important field which seems to have escaped analysis, where Clio offers unexpected help to those who in these troubled times are trying to keep their bearings by old landmarks, while fully aware that they are moving farther and farther from them every day. It is a generalization in the field of morals, and that is perhaps why it has escaped notice, but as it bears directly upon the most pressing problem of the hour—the effect upon society of the enlarged national control in industry and other things—it should offer whatever consolation it can bring to those who watch the running tide of public affairs with sad and disillusioned eyes, and it may perhaps help to cheer to some degree those who are struggling somewhat uncertainly to realize the aspirations of democracy.

If one looks over the political history of modern Europe and of America, three main facts stand out. There is in the first place that steady growth of representative government by means of the widening of the electorate, which now, at the close of the war, extends over practically the entire citizenship. This patent fact of the extension of the suffrage to a practically universal basis is what is in most people's minds when they speak of the growth of democracy in our era. Barrier after barrier has been passed until we have at last done everything which the conservatives of even a generation ago regarded as dangerous to the commonweal. We have done what Lecky so frankly characterized as political folly—we have placed power in the hands of the "unintelligent" and we have done this on a colossal scale. There is no need to elaborate this point,

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\*Although opening up a somewhat different theme to that in the foregoing chapters, this article, reprinted from the *Political Science Quarterly* for March, 1921, has been added as an appendix, for reasons which may appear toward the close.

but it is only by contrast with the extremely limited electorate of a century ago, that we can grasp the full significance of the change which has taken place. Instead of a few thousand leading citizens, the masses pass judgment on the policies and acts of the modern state.

Parallel with this familiar fact runs another hardly less familiar but somewhat more intricate. The scope of government has increased almost as notably as the suffrage. The concentration of power in the hands of war governments was but an extravagant and revolutionary phase of a movement which extends back through our whole era. When the modern states were taking shape under the stress of the new business conditions which the industrial revolution had brought about, the theory of government was that of *laissez-faire*. The chief aim was to get rid of the hampering paternalism of the old régime and allow the individual free scope for the development of the new business relationships which had their roots in the factory and the mine. Political institutions based upon old territorial sovereignty and more or less outworn administrative procedure, were ill-adapted to control and direct intelligently the political forces emerging under the aegis of capitalism. The principles of the new freedom enunciated by Turgot in France and by Adam Smith in Britain, were embedded to the full in the one constitution of a great state which was drawn up at that time—that of the United States, where the tradition was further developed through the influence of great jurists like John Marshall. The Supreme Court of the United States became the ultimate safeguard of the liberties of the individual against the interference of the government, in the eyes of orthodox political theorists, rescuing sovereignty itself from the possible tyranny of national representation in Congress.

From about the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, the trend of constitutional history has been along the lines of a growing conscious protest and an accumula-

tion of legislative enactments against this first great principle of *laissez-faire*. One can trace the development in the multiplication of administrative offices as well as in the scope and character of legislation. The machinery of government in the modern state has grown so vast and intricate as to defy the analysis of all but the most highly specialized experts. Government is no longer possible on the simple basis of trial and error carried out by distinguished amateurs, and if parliaments retain in outward appearance much of their earlier form, their debates touch but a fringe of the vast political control which they exercise. This vast increase in the scope of government needs only to be mentioned to be recognized as hardly less typical, in the growth of modern politics, than the growth of the franchise.

Starting with these two familiar generalizations we come upon the third, which is intimately connected with them, but which seems to escape notice.

Both the extension of the suffrage and the extension of the scope of government have increased the possibilities of corruption. Personal responsibility grows ever more difficult to place. Even in the administration of single departments the impersonal tends to replace the personal and reliance to be placed on machinery more, and on individual character less. Along with this growing impersonality of government grows the increased opportunity for corrupt practices from the very enlargement of its scope. With every enlargement there is that much more chance for graft. Wherever national affairs are entrusted to functionaries, which formerly were left for the private initiative of citizens, there is just that much more temptation for corruption.

Yet the history of public morals throughout the same period seems to indicate that the very reverse of this is true. Apparently, parallel with the enlargement of the suffrage and the extension of the scope of government, there has been, not a decline, but a steady growth in public honesty.

If this be so, the fact is of the utmost significance, for it means that a study of the past may relieve us of at least half our anxiety about the future. Distrust in democracy is twofold; distrust in its moral integrity and distrust in its capacity for affairs. If history can remove the former, the question narrows down to the simple—but as yet unsolved—issue of efficiency.

But is this really the case? History does not often present any such argument for optimism; and it is surely a bold optimism which can discover, either in the processes of democracy or in a world so susceptible to political corruption as our own, any lessened menace from the selfish ambitions of those whose private fortunes are bound up with public affairs, or even from the hardly less corrupting influences of communities which, under the guise of local patriotism, prey upon the interests of the commonweal. Moreover, although this optimism is justified only, if at all, by the facts of history, the facts have not yet been grappled with in any large and synthetic survey by historians. No scientific history of corrupt practices in politics has yet been written, no counterpart to the manuals of constitutional history dealing with the shady side of that structure. Such studies of corruption as have been made have been concerned with specific or local issues, or have been prepared as partisan attacks on political opponents, as pamphlets for the times, rather than as contributions to history. The subject of the misuse rather than the legitimate and sanctioned use of the machinery of government still awaits the scientific historian.

If, however, history has not solved the problem, it at least presents it to us; and it is time to examine its implications and frame a provisional hypothesis along lines which seem to fit the major facts upon which all can agree. Stated baldly, that hypothesis seems to be that, instead of increasing with the growth of democracy, the practice of

corruption in politics tends to decrease. What can history do with such an hypothesis?

The first and most obvious answer is to be found in a broad comparison of the practices of today with those admitted as legitimate or practised widely at various stages of the development of the modern state. Take first the basis of representative government itself, the election. It is hardly necessary to do more than call attention to the contrast between the methods of today and those of a century or so ago. What civilized country would now submit to the practices, which Hogarth's pencil has so graphically depicted, of the elections of the old régime? Dark corners still exist in all countries where such methods may be found, but they exist in defiance of the law and of the public conscience. The mixture of bribery and intimidation which so largely determined the suffrage upon which the government of the good old days reposed, would, if revealed today, endanger rather than strengthen the tenure of power of any civilized government which had consciously resorted to such devices. Yet some of the most glorious pages in the history of the English Parliament were due to statesmen whose power rested upon the support of men elected by means so corrupt as would today send to prison, instead of to St. Stephens, those who employed them. The revelations of the era of the first Reform Bill are so familiar to us that we seem to forget their implications in the contrast which they offer to the political life of today.

Corrupt manipulation of elections is, however, a much more intricate thing than that which shows itself in crude forms on election day. One is reminded of this especially in French elections, where the independence of the electorate suffers from the subtle but powerful influence of a bureaucracy whose interests are bound up with those of the administration, and perhaps as well from certain vested interests whose continuance depends upon government

support. But the most pessimistic critic of the politics of the Third Republic may find a reason for hesitation in any wholesale denunciation of present evils by a study of the practices sanctioned by a man capable otherwise of such loftiness of view as Guizot. It is true that Guizot overreached the mark even for the France of his day, but the fact remains that the methods which he employed were by no means outlawed after his overthrow. Compared with any previous period of French history, the electoral practices of the France of the Third Republic invite the attention of the optimist.

The same general facts stand out in a survey of electoral practices in the United States. With successive administrations turning the tables upon their opponents there have grown up safeguards of the public against corrupt practices which would nullify its will as registered in the ballot, to such an extent that the things done openly, even a generation ago, would set their perpetrators now behind the bars of federal or state prisons instead of securing for them office and power.

However poorly the laws may still be enforced in backward communities, the laws which have accumulated upon the statute books during the last generation to maintain the integrity of elections, bear witness to a constant heightening of moral effort in the fundamentals of representative government.

If one turns from elections and parliaments to administration and the civil service, the same general tendency marks the history of the last half-century. Almost within the memory of the present generation power has been regarded as an avenue to wealth. If one extends the survey back to the beginnings of political institutions, one comes upon the time when such a maxim would be almost axiomatic. It has required forces of revolution to induce kings and rulers even to account to the public for the spending of its money. The process by which government con-

tractors founded noble houses and so perpetuated in vested interests the enjoyment of the fruits of office, furnishes a striking contrast to the theory of democratic administration that the public servant should receive less for his services than he could procure for the same ability directed toward private ends.

What is scandalous today in the administration of the modern state was common practice in the days preceding representative government, and continued to be not uncommon practice, avowed and sought, until our own time. It may indeed be that the moral standards set for public service by democracy have demanded such a degree of self-sacrifice that efficiency has been hampered. The voting tax-payer's reluctance to see others profit from his contributions to the public purse has clothed itself in the altruistic language of general self-denial; but whatever selfish motives may lie at the root, the effect upon the administrative staff itself has been a heightened sense of responsibility, and the acceptance of standards of public honesty undreamt of in the past.

It may be objected that this is a misleading and superficial line of historial platitudes, and that while its legislative and administrative branches, both, have renounced the cruder methods of political corruption, the modern political system, extending as it does throughout the whole life of the nation, still perpetuates effectively, if more subtly, opportunities for corrupt practice. Where the public life and the business of the community are so largely controlled by legislation, and where that legislation is dependent upon so many personal factors, the problem of corruption tends to elude analysis. The critic of today may find in the functioning of government itself a counterpart of the cruder and more obvious corruption of earlier days.

The answer to this criticism demands more investigation than has yet been given it. But if it is meant to imply that

wherever legislation responds to the call of interest, it is necessarily corrupt, we are surely carrying the theory of politics over to an unjustifiable altruism. It can hardly be a sane theory of government which would exact of legislation such a degree of disinterestedness as would dissociate it from any large section of the community on the theory that it was bound up with the prejudices and self-interest of those who secured its adoption.

The problem here involves the whole field of the history of morals; a field so difficult that historians of the more cautious temper are inclined to refuse to deal with it. What after all are the criteria to be applied? The moral judgment of one age is not always applicable to another. Political corruption may be simply another name for inadequate machinery of government or inexperience in handling it, or for a low degree of political capacity. It may be a short-cut towards efficiency and justified by its results or its adaptation to a particular time and country. The history of morals ceases to be historical if it judges all ages and societies by a single standard. Throughout most of the Christian era for instance, the morals of the Roman world have been appraised according to the standards of the Christian Fathers. Yet it would go hard with the world today if it were to be measured by the ideals of a St. Jerome. The problem of morals in history cannot be solved by the application of absolute principles. Judged by Christian standards the Romans were surely in about as bad plight when they conquered the world as when they lost it. The province of history is the slow upbuilding of ordered society in this imperfect world and not the depiction of divine government in a City of God. Yet, on the other hand, were we to eliminate from our criticism those principles which furnish us with a point of contrast with reality, we should be equally at sea. There is only one criterion which will meet this compromise between the idealistic and the realistic point of view. The test lies in



what contributes most toward the commonweal. This does not mean what contributes most at any given moment, but what history in the long run will justify.

The conclusion seems to be that the further elimination of corruption in politics depends upon enlightenment. The chief measure of precaution on the part of any people is education, in order that it may discover where its own self-interest lies; and the only way to secure that end is by actual experience in political life, which means an ever-widening measure of democratic control.

The achievement of democratic efficiency is thus a fundamental chapter in the history of public morals.









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